

Punch & Robinetta



Gate

PUNCH & ROBINETTA



"Long live King Punch and Queen Robinetta!"

Punch & Robinetta

By Ethel M. Gate

With silhouettes by Rachel Lyman Field



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New Haven

Yale University Press

London, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press

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Punch & Robinetta

ONCE upon a time there were two children who lived in a travelling showman's caravan; one was his daughter, Robinetta, and the other a boy called Punch. Robinetta was just fourteen and as pretty as you please; in the day-time she always dressed in pink muslin with a star in her hair and danced on her toes while the showman banged the tambourine and the people shouted "Brava!" Punch called himself her brother, but he was really a foundling who had been adopted by the showman and brought up in the comic business. He was the same age as Robinetta and a very handsome fellow, but in the day-time he was obliged to cover his face with white chalk and streaks of red paint and wear a clown's clothes while he jumped through hoops, stood on his head or told the jokes and stories which the showman made up over his supper. They travelled about from

country to country, living in the caravan all the time and amusing the people of the villages they passed through; and in the evenings they took off their professional clothes and dressed like ordinary folk, while Punch chopped wood, made the fire and fetched water, and Robinetta cooked the supper and mended their clothes. The showman bothered himself very little about them beyond seeing that they worked hard and made no mistakes in their dancing and tumbling.

Now one day they came to a village in a strange country right away among the mountains, where the people all wore foreign clothes and spoke an outlandish tongue; however, they were highly delighted with Punch and Robinetta and gave them plenty of pennies for their performances, so the showman decided to make a long stay in that country, for the people seemed as if they could not have enough of them. For everyone spoke of Punch and Robinetta and said: "Have you seen the showman's children? They are the quaintest couple you ever saw and well worth a penny." But in the evening, after their work was over, the children would sit on the steps of the caravan and watch the mountains

and the stars and make up stories about them. And Punch said the mountains were the old giants turned to stone, sitting in a ring round the earth and watching the pigmy men run hither and thither like ants; and Robinetta said they were the thrones of the spirits who control the destinies of the world and wear the stars upon their foreheads. And the old showman said: "You are both wrong. The mountains are just mountains, and one is an old grandmother of a mountain who cannot get along without a night-cap and a shawl of white mist, and one is a terrible fellow who is always growling and muttering to himself like thunder, and another is just a gay young spark who has stuck a star in his bonnet and fancies himself hugely." And the children looked at the mountains, and certainly one of them looked very much like an old grandmother, so it seemed as if there might be something in what the showman said. However, it was very difficult to make up their minds on the subject, so one evening when they were quite tired of arguing one way or another Punch said, "Let us go and find out for ourselves."

So they set out, there and then, taking the

steep road which leads out of the village up and away over the mountain tops and into the world beyond. It was bright moonlight and the two children had no difficulty in finding their way at first, but when they were still a long way from the top the moon hid behind a cloud and in the darkness they missed the way and were soon stumbling up a steep, stony track which wound in and out between the boulders and appeared to lead nowhere. And at last, when they had wandered a long way and were very tired and had seen nothing, they sat themselves down with their backs to a rock covered with grey mosses and prepared to wait for morning. And presently the moon came out again and they saw they were right away among the tops of the mountains and the village beneath them looked no more than a pin's head of bright light. And Robinetta said: "That is our own fire by the caravan we can see. I wish we were down there beside it."

"Why," said a voice behind them, "I do believe it is the showman's daughter!" And looking round, they found that the rock they had been leaning against had vanished and in its stead there sat a very stately old lady with grey hair,

wrapped in a grey silk shawl. On her hands she wore rings sparkling with the most beautiful diamonds, and she was altogether very splendid and magnificent to see.

“Good evening, ma’am,” said Punch. “We beg your pardon. We did not see you sitting there.”

The old lady laughed. “I know you did not,” she said. “I heard you coming and made myself invisible, not knowing who it was. But I am very pleased to see you, for I have often watched you in the village and wished to have a nearer sight of you. And if you will wait while I wash my hands, we will all go home to my house for supper.”

Thereupon she took off her rings and hung them up in the sky, where they flashed and sparkled like a new constellation; then she washed her hands in the evening dew, put on her rings again and announced that she was quite ready. “The sky is my jewel box,” she said. “When I get tired of one set of jewels, I hang them up and choose fresh ones. You must often have noticed that the same stars are not in the sky all the year round. Now you know why.”

Then she gave a hand to each of the children and told them to have no fear, for her house was the most comfortable in the world and there was nothing in it to hurt a mouse. And when they came to a door in the mountain which opened of itself, they followed the old lady in quite eagerly, for they felt as if they had known her all their lives. And what a wonderful place it was! The whole mountain was the old lady's house, and it was full of galleries and staircases, and banqueting halls and gorgeous sleeping apartments of all descriptions. And somewhere in the very heart of the mountain was a big organ such as is to be found in the most beautiful cathedrals, and someone was playing the most entrancing music, which could be heard wherever one went. The walls and staircases were all made of polished marble of many colours streaked with veins of gold, and the roof was hung with golden lamps which shed a rosy light everywhere. Punch and Robinetta ran hither and thither exclaiming with delight, for they could never have imagined anything so marvellous. The old lady showed them everything they wished to see and at last took them each to a

beautiful little room and bade them dress themselves in the garments they would find laid out ready, and then they would sup. So the two children arrayed themselves in cloth of gold and the finest silk, and hastened to the banqueting hall.

“Now you look like your proper selves,” said the old lady, as they sat down to the feast. “Tomorrow I will send a courier down to your father with a message so that he may not be anxious about you, and he shall bring back Robinetta’s dancing dress and Punch’s costume and hoops, and you shall give me a private performance, which will be a great treat for me.” And when supper was over, she kissed them both very kindly and sent them to bed; so they slept on down that night and Punch dreamed that he was a king and Robinetta that she was a queen.

Next morning the old lady took them to the door of the mountain from whence they could see right down into the village where the caravan stood. And Punch said: “What a wind there is down there! Just see how the paper is blowing about the streets!” And as he spoke a large piece of pink paper was carried by a gust of wind right over the chimney-tops and up the mountain-side,

and following it was another oddly shaped piece which was red and white, and then quite a number of small pieces like white pennies came spinning after; and as they came nearer, it was quite plain that the pink one was Robinetta's dancing dress, the red and white one Punch's costume, and the round pennies the big hoops through which he had to jump. Then the wind caught them all into one heap and cast them at their feet. "Now what do you think of my courier?" said the old lady, and Punch said, "Wonders will never cease!"

Meanwhile Robinetta had run away to put on her dancing dress, but found she had no star for her hair. "Never mind," said the old lady. "You shall come with me this evening and pick the prettiest star you can see in the sky for your very own."

Then Punch came running up to say he had found a letter in the pocket of his clown's dress. It was from the old showman and said: "Punch and Robinetta: I am about to retire from business and I therefore recommend you to take a good holiday until you are ready to set up in business on your own account. You are in good



"Punch and Robinetta danced together as lightly as two feathers."

hands where you are now. Present my respectful compliments to the Old Lady of the Mountains and remember how I told you one of the mountains was an old grandmother."

"That is a most observant man," said the old lady, when she heard of it. "I have long suspected it."

Then she led them to a splendid hall in the heart of the mountain and there were high jinks. Robinetta stood on her toes and danced while an invisible fiddler fiddled away for dear life; then Punch jumped through a dozen hoops backward one after the other and stood on his head before one could say "Jack Robinson." How the old lady laughed, to be sure, and clapped her hands. Then the fiddler struck up a fresh tune and Punch and Robinetta danced together as lightly as two feathers, and then nothing would do but the old lady herself must tread a gavotte, which she did in a stately fashion which was a pleasure to behold. And after that there were cakes and wine and baskets of peaches, and they were all enjoying themselves heartily when there came a tremendous bang at the door of the mountain and the old lady exclaimed: "Oh, dear!

there is my grandson. Now we shall have no more peace."

A few moments later a resplendent personage, clad most elegantly in a costume of amethyst and silver with a big diamond in his cap, burst into the chamber. "Bless my soul!" exclaimed this young gentleman. "What is this? A party? Why was I not invited?"

"How now, scapegrace!" said the old lady. "Where are your manners? Come hither and be introduced properly. This is Punch and Robinetta, who are paying me a visit, and this"—she continued, addressing the two children—"is my grandson, who lives in the solitary pinnacle and has great difficulty in behaving himself."

"Charmed!" said the young gentleman, with a very low bow. "Delighted!" said Punch and Robinetta.

"You must come and see my house," said the young gentleman, who seemed very jolly and good-hearted in spite of being a tremendous dandy. "I can promise you some fine fun."

"Enjoy yourself here as much as you please, grandson," said the old lady. "But neither Punch nor Robinetta shall have their necks broken

through your mad pranks. My grandson," she continued, "thinks everybody as fond as himself of precipices, whereas the very sight of his house makes me feel giddy, and how anybody can get up- and downstairs inside it passes belief."

"All the same I should like very much to see it," said Punch, which pleased the young gentleman immensely, so the two became great friends, and nothing would do but Punch must teach the young gentleman to jump through a hoop backward and many other tricks requiring great agility. Then they all danced country dances till it was time to go to bed, when the young gentleman took himself off, vowing he was stiff all over. And at parting he took the big diamond out of his cap and gave it to Punch, begging him to visit him in his solitary pinnacle. Robinetta was not invited because he said perhaps after all his house was not quite suited to ladies.

After that he came to see them every day and there was no peace, as the old lady had said. However, he was so merry and good-humoured, it was impossible to be vexed with him, and as the old lady said: "Although he does not pay such strict attention to decorum as I could wish,

he is a good lad and would not willingly harm a fly. He is not like the old man who lives in the volcano."

"Why!" said Punch, "is he then such a shocking character?"

"He is indeed," said the old lady. "He considers nobody but himself. Should you ever meet him, have nothing to do with him."

A few days later, Punch and Robinetta were out on the mountain-side when Punch took it into his head to pay a visit to the young gentleman in his solitary pinnacle.

"Wait here for me," he said to Robinetta, "while I climb up and try to find the door."

So Robinetta sat down to wait. She had not sat there very long before someone said, "Are you Robinetta?" She turned round and saw an old man muffled up in furs, with a great fur cap on his head. "Yes," she said.

"I have been looking for you," said the old man. "Do you think a king's son should spend his life standing on his head and jumping through hoops?"

"What do you mean?" said Robinetta.

“Come with me and I will tell you all about it,” said the old man.

So Robinetta went with the old man and as they walked he told her how Punch was a king's son who had been stolen by gypsies and abandoned by the roadside, and how he had been found by her own father, who, being ignorant of his birth, had brought him up in the comic business.

“And from my house,” said the old man, “you can see right down into his kingdom where by right he should be ruler now. It is all going to rack and ruin for want of someone to look after it.”

So Robinetta, who was very eager to see Punch's kingdom, went with the old man without noticing where she was going, and before she knew what had happened, the old man had opened a door in one of the mountains and pulled her inside, and there she was locked inside the volcano. Oh, how hot it was there and how sooty! There was a great hole in the middle of the floor and a big chimney over it, and huge flames from the fires which are in the middle of

the earth came roaring out of the hole and shot up the chimney out of sight.

“Now we can be comfortable,” said the old man, throwing off his furs and warming his hands at the flames. “Come here and be sociable and don’t stand there sulking.”

“Oh, do please let me out,” said Robinetta; “I cannot stay here; I shall die of the heat.”

“Let you out!” said the old man. “A likely thing. No, you stay here now I’ve got you, and if you are troublesome we will go down to the next floor, where it is hotter still.” Then he took a string of sausages out of his pocket and toasted them on his knife at the flames, and when he had finished his dinner he ordered Robinetta to dance. Poor Robinetta was nearly fainting with the heat and could scarcely put one foot before the other, but she had to obey, and the old man abused her outrageously for dancing so badly and threatened to throw her down the hole in the floor.

Meanwhile Punch was finding it was not so easy as he imagined to call on the young gentleman in the solitary pinnacle. The way was very steep with scarcely sufficient footing for a goat,

and he could find nothing at all resembling a door, so, not wishing to leave Robinetta long alone, he soon gave it up and returned to the place where he had left her. Greatly astonished not to find her there, he called her name, and getting no reply hastened back to the old lady's house. He ran upstairs and downstairs, from gallery to gallery, calling, "Robinetta! Robinetta!" and at last, feeling really alarmed, ventured to arouse the old lady from her midday nap. As soon as she heard that Robinetta was missing she exclaimed: "This is the work of the old man in the volcano. Depend upon it, my grandson has been gossiping." Then she looked very earnestly in a magic mirror which hung over her dressing table and presently she said: "Yes, she is locked up in the volcano. There is not a moment to be lost if she is not to die of the heat. Get you to my grandson with all speed; he alone can help you."

"How shall I find the door of his house?" said Punch.

"Climb to the very top of the pinnacle and at the summit you will find a trap-door. Bang on it till he admits you."

So Punch hastened off as fast as his legs could carry him. It was a long way from the old lady's house to the pinnacle and the ascent seemed even steeper and more dangerous than before; to make matters worse the sky became very stormy and overcast. However, Punch struggled on valiantly, and though many times he thought he must fall and be dashed to pieces at the foot of the precipices, at last he reached the summit; and there was a neat trap-door with a brass plate inscribed with the word "Knock." Punch knocked and knocked and hammered and hammered until his knuckles were sore; then he took off a boot and banged with that. Just as his patience was exhausted, the trap-door flew open and the head of the young gentleman suddenly appeared, and as Punch was in the very act of delivering a final bang he could not stop himself in time but caught the young gentleman a frightful blow on the head with the heel of the boot, which caused him to fall back inside the pinnacle and suddenly disappear. Much upset, Punch looked down the trap-door and saw there was an upright ladder inside going down perfectly straight for a couple of hundred feet, and at the

bottom was a little heap of amethyst and silver which must be the young gentleman himself. Punch did not hesitate a moment; he lowered himself inside the pinnacle and clambered down the ladder as hard as he could go; when he got to the bottom he saw to his delight that the young gentleman was sitting up holding his head.

"I was afraid you were killed," said Punch.

"It takes more than that to kill me," said the young gentleman. "But you are a nice fellow. I gave you a diamond and you give me a crack on the head. What do you mean by it?"

"I am very sorry," said Punch. "But I was desperate. Robinetta is lost; she is a prisoner in the volcano."

"Good gracious me!" cried the young gentleman, bounding to his feet. "Why didn't you say so before? Half a jiffy, while I get a rope."

He rushed into a little room at the foot of the ladder and was back instantly with a stout rope which he wound round Punch like cotton on a reel. "Now, up you go," he said, and soon both were at the top of the ladder again. There he bade Punch get on his back and shut his eyes, "for," said he, "this place is too steep for a mortal

to get down quickly and you will need all your wits presently." When he bade Punch open his eyes again they were standing at the opening of a small hole in the mountain-side. Punch looked in and saw the hole went right down into the heart of the mountain like a sloping chimney; the sides were covered with soot and there was no sort of foothold. "This is a sort of funnel the old man made to carry off the heat when it is too fierce," said the young gentleman, "for even he can only stand a certain amount."

Then he unwound the rope from about Punch, coiling it carefully as he did so, and made one end fast to a huge rock standing near. He bade Punch take the coil of rope and, when he gave the signal, lower them both down the black hole. So Punch took a firm grip of the rope, and the young gentleman, grasping Punch's ankles, began to slide down the hole; then Punch lowered himself cautiously and began to pay out the rope; thus they slid down into the heart of the mountain, tearing their clothes and getting nearly choked with soot; and when at last they reached the bottom they looked like a pair of chimney sweeps. They had no time to think of their ap-

pearance, however, for they found themselves hanging in mid-air, having come right through the ceiling of the chamber where poor Robinetta was a prisoner, and had not the old man been so occupied in abusing her because she could not even stand, much less dance, they would have been in a very awkward position. However, Punch slid down the rope like lightning and the young gentleman whipped out his knife, cut off the spare end of the rope, hastily made a slip-knot and springing upon the old gentleman tied him up as neatly and tightly as heart could wish almost before he knew what was happening. Then he picked up Robinetta, bade her clasp her arms round his neck, and calling to Punch to follow him, clambered nimbly up the rope and disappeared through the hole in the ceiling. Punch did not need twice telling and soon all three were scrambling and hauling themselves up the black chimney, for Robinetta could help herself as well as any boy when she found a stout rope in her hands. "That is the advantage of being educated by a showman," said the young gentleman, when they were all safe and sound on the mountain-side once more. And all three of

them were blacker than the blackest tinker that ever was seen.

"There's a good suit of clothes ruined!" said the young gentleman.

"How shall we ever get clean?" said Punch.

"We cannot possibly return to the house of the Old Lady of the Mountains in this condition," said Robinetta.

"I know!" said the young gentleman. "What is the use of being a king's son if you cannot be waited on now and then? I will send a courier down to your kingdom and tell the good people you are here and they are to bring up whatever is necessary."

"Whatever do you mean?" said Punch.

"Robinetta will tell you," said the young gentleman, as he strolled off to despatch his courier, and Robinetta recounted all the old man of the volcano had told her when he was luring her into his power.

"I don't know what to think of it," said Punch. "However, we shall soon see if anything is going to happen." And sure enough, in a very little time the strangest crowd of people began to appear, coming up the farther side of the

mountain. They had all sorts of bundles and packages which they proceeded to unroll, and in a short time they had run up two purple tents of the finest silk and proceeded to furnish them with carpets and cushions and every luxury. Then two appeared trundling two large baths before them like hoops, followed by a procession with kettles of boiling water.

A number of cooks in white caps and aprons began to build a fire and prepare a feast, and last of all a band of musicians appeared, escorting a company of ladies and gentlemen who presented themselves before Punch and Robinetta and begged them to accept their services. So Punch and Robinetta entered the two silken tents and were soon rid of their tattered clothes and properly arrayed in cloth of gold and silver. Then the musicians struck up and they advanced to the feast.

“But we cannot sit down without our two good friends,” said Punch.

And at the moment, who should appear but the young gentleman himself, more gorgeously arrayed than ever, escorting the Old Lady of the Mountain.

“My dear child,” said the old lady to Robinetta, “I am rejoiced to see that you are safe.”

“How can I ever thank you enough for all you have done?” said Punch to the young gentleman.

Then they all sat down to the feast, which was of the utmost magnificence, and spent the whole night dancing by torchlight. And in the morning Punch and Robinetta took leave of the old lady and her grandson and went down into the world beyond the mountains to take possession of Punch’s kingdom.

They found much to be done, and Punch had to fight two wars with neighbouring kings before he could clear his kingdom of the plundering bands which infested it. But after that there was no more trouble and Punch was wedded to Robinetta with great pomp amid the rejoicings of the people, who shouted with one voice, “Long live King Punch and Queen Robinetta!”

As for the old showman, he was given a post at court and passed the remainder of his days in the pursuit of learning. So they all lived happily ever after.

The Ball

UNDERNEATH the beech trees,
Threading in and out,
All the gay and dancing elves
Are twirling round about.

See their golden slippers!
See their diamond crowns!
See their jewelled girdles, and
Look at their gossamer gowns!

The rings on their tiny fingers
Sparkle like the dew.
Watch how they make their curtsies, and—
Mind they don't see you!

The Tapestry Prince

ONCE upon a time there was an unfortunate princess whose father was proud and haughty and despised all fairies. Consequently none came to her christening and she had to do without the good gifts usually bestowed on such occasions. And she grew up without ever seeing anyone in the least like a fairy except a little old lady who sometimes came into the royal nursery and sat in the chimney corner while the little princess sewed at her sampler. And when the pattern was too difficult and the stitches hard, the old lady would take the sampler herself and work a little piece, and after that the needle would go in and out like magic, so that everyone said what a wonderful embroideress the princess was, to be sure! Nobody ever saw the old lady come and go, for she never was there when the royal nurse was looking, but the princess loved her dearly



"She grew up without ever seeing anyone in the least like a fairy except a little old lady who sometimes came into the royal nursery."

and worked hard at her sampler to please her. And on her fourteenth birthday the old lady gave her a case of needles made of pure gold which she bade her never part with, and after that the princess did not see her again, for a tyrant invaded the country, overthrew her father and carried her away captive to a strange land.

She was shut up in a high tower with only an old woman and her guards, and there she had to work hard for her living. Her life was spared because her fame as an embroideress had spread all over the world, so the tyrant made her embroider mantles for himself and gowns for his wife and robes for his baby daughter. When she had nothing else to do, she was set to work upon a piece of tapestry which was to hang in the council chamber, and the golden needles the old lady had given her went in and out like magic, so that her work was the admiration of all beholders. But she could never get any news of what had happened to her father and mother, so after a while she was forced to believe they were dead; and she was very unhappy.

She was kept in prison a very long time, until

the tyrant's daughter herself was grown up, and the poor princess began to look quite old and to lose her looks. And all that time she never saw anyone but the old woman who waited on her and the men who guarded the tower and carried away her work when it was finished. But one day she had a visitor. The tyrant's daughter was to be married and the wedding was to be the grandest ever seen, and nothing would please the bride but that she must see the princess and give the order for her dresses herself.

So the tyrant's daughter came to the tower and was very particular indeed about the work to be done. "And mind you are not idle," she said to the princess, "for I will not have my wedding delayed to suit your pleasure."

The princess promised most faithfully to do all that she required and have it ready by the appointed day, and the tyrant's daughter was just going when she noticed the unfinished tapestry hanging on the wall. "Why, what is this doing here, decorating your chamber, drudge?" she said. "Make haste and finish it, for I will have it hung behind my chair at my wedding feast."

Now when she heard this, the poor princess felt ready to cry, for she had drawn all the figures in the tapestry and worked every inch of it herself. It represented a noble prince and his followers chasing a milk-white doe through the forest, and it had hung on the wall so long that the princess felt she would be losing her only friends when it was gone. However, she knew she must obey, so she dried her eyes and sat down to keep her promise to the tyrant's daughter.

All day for many days she stitched and stitched at the bride's dresses, and in the evenings she would work at the tapestry until she could not see any more.

And one evening she was so tired that she fell asleep with her golden needle in her hand and her head resting on the flower she was embroidering. Presently someone touched her on the shoulder and, springing to her feet, what was her astonishment to see it was the prince in the tapestry.

"Put your foot on the frame, give me your hand and come up here," he said, and without stopping to think she gave him her hand and the

next moment found herself standing by his side in the forest.

“Welcome, gracious lady,” said the prince, presenting his followers, who hastened to kiss her hand and assure her of their respectful devotion. Then one brought a white horse for her to mount, the horns were blown, and away they went through the forest which spread all round them. How delightful it was! The milk-white doe sped away among the trees and the princess followed on her steed, feeling as free as air, while the prince rode at her right hand. And after riding, as it seemed, for hours, they came in sight of a mighty castle and were about to dismount when the prince laid his hand on her bridle rein and said, “We must return. Day is about to dawn and we must all be found in our places.” So the horses were turned round and galloped back and presently the princess found herself at the place they started from. She could see her prison chamber as though she were looking through a window, and at the thought of returning her heart sank.

“Let me stay here with you,” she cried.

“Alas!” said the Tapestry Prince, “that may

not be. At dawn we tapestry figures will all be lifeless, but you have no place among us. You must go back to the world."

So she dismounted and the prince knelt to kiss her hand. Then she stepped back into her room and at that moment day dawned and she found herself sitting in her chair and the tapestry figures all in their places, quite still and lifeless in the picture.

"What a wonderful dream," she said to herself. "How I wish it were true!" However, there was no time to be wasted; the old woman soon appeared with her frugal breakfast and after that she worked hard all day at the bride's dresses and in the evening embroidered a few more flowers on the tapestry. She was careful not to fall asleep in her chair that night, for when there is work to be done one must take proper rest and she was anxious to keep her promise to the tyrant's daughter and not delay the wedding.

However, one evening a few nights later she again fell asleep in her chair from sheer weariness. The tyrant's daughter had been to see how the work was getting on and had been very difficult to please, and the poor princess was quite

worn out. She had not long been asleep when she was again awakened by someone touching her on the shoulder and found the Tapestry Prince bending over her. "Give me your hand," he said. "We are all waiting for you to show us the way to the enchanted castle in the forest. The milk-white doe will not go there for anyone but you."

In an instant she was standing beside him in the forest, her horse was brought, the milk-white doe leapt forward and away they went. This time it seemed a very little while before they came in sight of the castle; it was a very noble building with immensely thick walls and a strong tower and it was guarded all round by a broad moat full of water. The drawbridge which led to the only entrance was down and the portcullis was up; nevertheless it seemed impossible to enter, for the doors of the gateway were locked and in front of them was an impassable thicket of thorns.

One of the prince's followers blew a loud blast upon his horn and immediately a warder appeared upon the battlements.

"Hola!" cried the prince. "Come down, sirrah, and admit this noble lady."

"We are all prisoners here," said the warder, "and can admit nobody. But as for the noble lady, she may enter if she can, but if she do, it will be by her own might, for no man can help her."

"As to that we will soon see," said the prince. "But meanwhile tell me who is with you in the castle."

"There is no one here but an aged king and queen and one or two servants," said the warder. "And we have been shut up here so long that we have forgotten our own names and whence we came, but we have been told that one day a noble lady will deliver us."

Then cried the princess: "Oh, that I might be that lady! Most noble prince, help me to enter the castle, for—who knows?—it may be my own father and mother who are held here prisoners."

Then the prince ordered his followers to cleave a way through the thicket with their swords. But what was their astonishment to find that they could make no progress whatever! The thorns and briars grew as fast as they smote them asunder and after an hour's fierce assault the thicket looked as dense as ever. Then they tried

thrusting the briars aside and trampling them under foot, but as fast as they were pushed out of the way they sprang back again and not one of the men was strong enough to snap a briar in two. So after a while the princess bade them desist.

“Did not the warder say I must enter by my own might?” she said. “I am minded to see what I can do myself.” So although the Tapestry Prince protested that her delicate hands would be torn in pieces by the cruel thorns, she began patiently untangling the briars and snapping the stubborn twigs, and lo and behold! the briars stayed where she put them and the stiffest twigs broke easily in her fingers. “Hurrah!” cried the retinue. “The princess will make her way in!” But at that moment the milk-white doe, who had been standing patiently near by all the while, bounded hastily away into the forest and the prince cried, “To horse! To horse! Dawn is near and we may not stay. Come away, princess. To-morrow night we will return and you shall enter the castle and deliver the prisoners.” So though she was very loth to leave her task half done, the princess mounted her horse and galloped

back through the forest to the place they had started from.

Dawn was just breaking when she found herself sitting once more in her prison chamber before the tapestry frame, but this time she did not say it was a dream. All that day she worked hard at the bride's dresses and in the evening stitched industriously at the tapestry until she fell asleep. Immediately the Tapestry Prince touched her on the shoulder she sprang up ready for her ride through the forest and was soon galloping away as fast as her steed could carry her.

In an incredibly short space of time they were standing once more in front of the castle, but what was their disappointment to find that all the work the princess had done overnight was wasted and the thicket was as large and as closely tangled as ever.

"Come, there is no time to be wasted," cried the princess; and leaping from the saddle she fell to work with a will. In spite of what had happened the night before, the prince and his followers tried to help her, but they could do nothing at all and were forced to content themselves with protecting her dress from the briars

and tying up her hand when the thorns tore it. The princess worked on and on, and it really seemed as if she would succeed in making her way into the castle, when once more the milk-white doe bounded away and they were forced to return before day broke. When next night, after a hard day's work, the princess again rode through the forest with the Tapestry Prince they found the thicket grown up again before the castle door and everything as bad as ever.

"I will try just this once more," said the princess, "and if I do not succeed I must think of a fresh plan." So she fell to work with a will and it really seemed as if she would be successful, but just when she had got as far as she had the night before the milk-white doe bounded away and they were forced to follow.

"Can you see all that I am doing during the day, although you appear lifeless?" asked the princess as she rode by the Tapestry Prince.

"Yes, noble lady," answered the prince.

"Then," said the princess, "however many times I may fall asleep by the tapestry, do not wake me until I am ready for you. I must keep my promise to my mistress, the tyrant's daugh-

ter, but when I have finished my task I will fold all neatly and lay my needlecase in my lap. When you see this you may summon me once more to the forest."

So the Tapestry Prince promised to do as she said and she returned to her prison chamber just as day dawned.

The next day she worked all day at the bride's dresses and when evening came she unpicked a corner of the tapestry and in the empty space she traced the figure of a young girl begging alms from the prince and his followers. When it was finished she thought it would look very much like herself as she used to be. "And then," she said, "I shall have my own place among the tapestry figures and we shall see what we shall see."

She worked very hard at the bridal dress and her golden needle flew in and out like magic, so that when the tyrant's daughter came several days later to examine the work, even she was satisfied.

"But," she said, "what have you done to the tapestry and who is this girl you are putting into the picture?"

"She is a beggar maid," said the princess, "and I thought she would look well."

"A beggar maid!" said the tyrant's daughter, scornfully. "She is dressed very finely for a beggar."

"Perhaps she is going to be married," said the princess. "But it is really quite a plain dress and I think it is an ornament to the picture."

The tyrant's daughter, however, could not bear that anyone should look fine and gay but herself, and she grumbled very much. "And mark me, drudge," she said, "if both my dresses and the tapestry are not ready by my wedding day, you shall suffer for it."

"I have given you my word," said the princess, "that all shall be ready by your wedding morning."

Thereafter she worked both day and night and often fell asleep at her tapestry frame, but she was never wakened by the Tapestry Prince and she took no more rides in the forest. The figure of the beggar maid grew under her fingers, and the tyrant's daughter was beside herself with curiosity to know if it were a portrait of anyone the princess had ever seen when she was free.

"For if it is," she said, "I will not rest till I have found her and sent her away to the uttermost parts of the earth." The princess, however, would say nothing, but the old woman who brought her meals thought the beggar maid was the very image of the princess herself when she was first shut up in prison. However, she had no love for the tyrant's daughter, so she also said nothing.

And on the evening before the wedding day, the last stitch was put in the bride's wedding-gown, the last flower was worked on the beggar girl's dress and all was finished. Then the princess folded all the dresses in one great pile, laid her needlecase in her lap and fell fast asleep with her head resting on the tapestry frame. Very soon she was roused by the Tapestry Prince, who gave her his hand and helped her step through the tapestry frame into the forest.

"Welcome, welcome, beloved Princess," he said. "Now you have your own place among us and need never go back to the world any more, for you are one of the tapestry figures."

And so it was indeed. The princess found she was wearing the very same frock that she had worked for the beggar girl in the picture and her

feet were bare and her hair was loose. Nevertheless the prince and his followers treated her with the utmost respect and the prince mounted her on his own horse and wrapped her in his own splendid mantle. Then away they went through the forest and the milk-white doe led them straight to the castle once more. There the princess at once fell to work upon the thicket of thorns, which seemed higher and more impassable than ever. The thorns pierced her delicate fingers, and the briars tore her bare feet, but she stopped for nothing and scarcely seemed to feel the pain of her hands. And this time the milk-white doe stood near at hand and watched all that was done. As dawn drew near the prince looked to see if the doe would bound away into the forest as before, but she never stirred and presently the sun rose and they all knew they were safe and need never return to the tapestry frame any more. And then the prince and his followers gave a mighty cheer, for the princess had removed the last briar and the way across the drawbridge was clear. The warder came out upon the battlements above, followed by the servants in the castle, and all shouted for joy.

and the great doors of the castle opened of their own accord.

The prince and princess entered in, followed by their retinue, and in the innermost hall of the castle they found an ancient king and queen sitting on two chairs of state.

"The door of the castle is open and you are free," said the princess. "Come with us and we will take you to your own land."

"Alas!" said the old king. "In this castle a day is as long as a year and we have been here so long that we have forgotten our own names and whence we came."

Then the princess looked very carefully at them and at the rings the old queen was wearing and she said, "Why, you are my own dear father and mother," and she told them their names and the name of their country. And they remembered and said, "Yes, it is so, and you are our own fair daughter, but you are as young and beautiful as when we lost you. Let us leave this place at once lest you also grow old and grey." So they embraced each other with great joy and left the castle, followed by the prince and all their retinue.

And standing just beyond the drawbridge they saw the milk-white doe waiting for them. "Beautiful creature," cried the princess, "but for you I should never have found my father and mother. You shall wear a collar of gold and no one shall molest you as long as you live."

The milk-white doe walked straight up to the princess and the princess put her arms round its neck and kissed it. The same instant the doe vanished and in its place stood the little old lady who used to come into the princess's nursery when she was little girl and who gave her the golden needles.

"I see you have made good use of my gift," said the little old lady, as she returned the princess's kiss most affectionately. "If your father had not been so foolish you would have been my god-daughter and we should all have been spared a great deal of trouble. As it was, I have always taken the greatest interest in you and have done what I could, for it was I who guided your fingers when you worked your own portrait in the tapestry."

"But alas, I am no longer like the portrait," said the princess.

"Indeed you are!" cried the prince. "You are the most beautiful princess in the whole world, and if you will not have me for your husband, I will die a bachelor."

Then the princess gave him her hand, for she loved him dearly, and the king and queen blessed them, so everyone was happy. "And now," said the old lady, "let us be gone. To you, my dear child, I will give your father's old kingdom for your dowry. You may return thither when you please and you will find everything in readiness and the tyrant will never trouble you any more. As for your father and mother, they may go with you or they may remain here in this castle of mine, which they will find a very pleasant place now they can go in and out as they please. And whichever they do, I do not think your father will ever speak disrespectfully of the fairies again."

Then said the king, "Indeed, gracious lady, I am heartily ashamed of my foolishness and with your permission I will remain here with the queen, only craving the boon of a visit from my daughter and her husband once a year."

"It is granted," said the old lady. Then the

princess kissed her parents very affectionately and she and the prince with all his following galloped away to her father's kingdom, where they were married and lived happily ever after.

Meanwhile the tyrant's daughter had sent for her bridal robes and the tapestry which was to hang behind her chair at her wedding feast. What was her anger when her servants returned crying that the princess had vanished and the tapestry was ruined.

"Stuff and nonsense!" she cried. "The drudge is afraid and is hiding. Follow me and I warrant me I will find her and when I do she shall suffer for it." So she hurried off to the tower and searched it from top to bottom, but no sign of the princess could she see. As for the tapestry, it presented the oddest appearance imaginable; all the places where the figures had stood were empty and only the background was left. The tyrant's daughter stormed and raved, and presently her father himself arrived to know why she was not dressed and ready for the wedding. When he saw the tapestry and heard that his prisoner was missing his rage knew no bounds.

"Here is a nice state of affairs," he cried. "The appearance of the wedding feast will be ruined. How are those tapestry figures to be filled in at a moment's notice?"

"As to that, perhaps I can help you," said a little old lady who appeared among them, nobody knew how. "Step up yourself into the picture and let us see how you look." So, though he did not wish to do anything of the sort and had no idea how it was to be done, he stepped up into the picture and filled up the place the Tapestry Prince had occupied.

"And now let us have half a dozen of your followers, as dark and cruel as yourself," said the old lady. Thereupon six of his retinue stepped forward greatly against their will and ranged themselves in the picture behind him.

"Now we are all complete," said the old lady, "except the beggar maid. Come, you," she said to the tyrant's daughter; "you will do admirably and I promise you your gown shall not be too handsome for your station in life."

So the tyrant's daughter was obliged to step up into the picture and kneel down in the beggar

maid's place, and her fine robes turned into a poor dress all patched and torn.

"Now you are all in your right places where you can do no more mischief," said the old lady. "Tapestry figures you are and tapestry figures you shall remain." And unless they have fallen to pieces, there they are to this day.

The Minstrel

THE Minstrel marches down the road,
Singing of the lands he has seen,
And how he succoured a wounded knight
And kissed the hand of a queen.

Behind him lies his mountain home,
Before him lies the sea;
And he'll embark in a stately ship—
I would that I were he!

But when he hears the Christmas bells
Ring out in a far countree,
Perchance he'll think of his own fireside
And wish that he were me.

The Two Poor Seamstresses

ONCE upon a time there were two poor sisters who lived all by themselves in a little house in an ancient city. Their parents were dead and there was no one to care what became of them, except the stork who had a nest on the roof of their house. So they lived very quietly and worked very hard, sewing gowns for the great court ladies. And Lucilla, the elder, could sew the finest seam that ever was heard of, while Espriota, the younger sister, was an embroideress whom none could surpass. Nevertheless, the people of the city were greedy and unkind and paid very little for their work, so the two sisters remained poor and only managed to make just enough to keep body and soul together.

Now it happened that one evening they were eating their scanty supper and were anxiously thinking how to spend the two pieces of silver



*"Once upon a time there were two poor sisters who
lived . . . in an ancient city."*

they had earned that day, when there came a knock at the door and a messenger from the ruler of the city entered, saying that their presence was required at once. When they arrived at the ruler's fine mansion they found everything in a great commotion, for the ruler's daughter was to sail away on the morrow to a foreign land and her principal tirewoman had fallen sick and was at the point of death.

"You must accompany my daughter in the ship," said the ruler, "to look after her dresses and see that she has everything she requires. I have heard of your skill with your needle and that you can be trusted. Let me have no arguments about it but go on board at once."

So they were hurried on board ship without more ado and nobody cared whether they were willing or not. They were given a little cabin where they could work and sleep, and were forbidden on any account to come on deck or get in their mistress's way, so there they stayed and many a time did they wish themselves at home again.

One night a dreadful storm arose; the wind howled and the waves beat against the ship with

such fury that every moment it seemed they must be lost. Suddenly the ship lurched so that Lucilla and Espriota were nearly thrown down, and the next instant they heard a great trampling of feet overhead and much shouting of the sailors and a terrible commotion all over the vessel. A few moments later all was quiet again, the wind was not so loud and the waves appeared to abate their fury. "I believe the storm is going down," said Lucilla. "Let us try to get a little rest." So they lay down in their blankets and were soon fast asleep.

When they awoke it was broad daylight and they sprang up expecting to be severely rated for lying abed so late. But suddenly they noticed that there was not a sound in the vessel, not even a sailor singing in the shrouds, and they felt very uneasy. Lucilla went to fetch a pitcher of water and immediately returned crying that they had been wrecked and the ship had been abandoned. Espriota ran on deck and together they searched the ship from end to end. It was only too true—the boats were gone, there was not a soul on board, and the ship lay fast aground on a reef of pink coral at the entrance to the most beau-

tiful bay they had ever seen. On the farther side of the bay was a landing stage with steps of white marble; and as they watched, a boat put off and came toward the ship. They could see no oarsman, but there appeared to be one passenger standing very solemnly at the prow, and as the boat drew nigh they saw that it was a stork, who arched his neck and bowed his head very grandly, as though to say, "Welcome to the Island!"

"Why," cried the sisters, "it is our own dear stork from home. We shall not feel at all frightened now."

A silken ladder was hanging over the side of the ship, so the sisters got into the boat at once and floated across the bay to the marble steps, where they landed.

It was the most beautiful island that can be imagined. They wandered through groves full of nightingales, by brooks clear as crystal, and wild deer came out of the thickets without fear and let them fondle them and pat their sleek necks.

"It is quite plain," said Espriota, "that this is a most happy place. There is nothing here that would harm a fly. Let us go on."

At last they came to a wonderful palace surrounded by gardens. There were fountains and courtyards, and marble terraces, alleys full of roses, and pools full of lilies and tiny jewelled fish; there were peacocks and humming-birds and black swans and white swans and everything the heart could desire, while the palace itself was magnificent beyond compare. The sisters entered by doors of beaten gold and looked around in amazement; everything was of the costliest description but not a soul was to be seen. They waited a long time for someone to approach, and, as no one appeared they ventured to enter the inner apartments and, gaining courage, wandered from room to room, exclaiming at all the beautiful things they saw, but meeting no one. Up and down they went, and at length they decided that they must leave the palace and return to the ship, as evening would soon be coming on. As they turned to seek the grand staircase, however, they met their friend the stork, who immediately led them with much solemnity into another room where they found a banquet served on gold plate, and two gold chairs placed ready for them. The stork marched to the table,

on which was a fine plum cake, and waited for Espriota to cut him a large slice, after which he stood on one leg behind her chair until she had finished her own supper. As soon as they had supped he led them out on to a balcony where they were entertained by a concert of music which seemed to come from nowhere.

When it was ended the stork walked solemnly across the room and tapped with his beak on a door, which immediately opened; the sisters followed him and saw a lofty chamber elegantly furnished and two silken couches prepared for them.

"This, it seems, is to be our bedchamber," said the sisters. "Good night, dear stork. How glad we are to have you here." The stork bent his head for them to kiss his brow; then they entered their bedchamber and were soon fast asleep.

But in the very middle of the night they awoke suddenly and heard a voice beneath their window exclaiming, "Alas! Alas! Oh, woe is me! Would that I were dead!" And this was followed by a most curious sound which was half a sob and half a gulp.

Lucilla and Espriota sprang from their

couches and, hastily wrapping their mantles about them, ran to the window. Beneath them they could see the marble terrace glistening in the moonlight, but not a soul was in sight. They listened a long while, but nothing more was to be heard and at last they went back to bed and fell fast asleep again.

Next morning they rose early and went in search of the stork, whom they found standing on one leg on the terrace and looking very wise and solemn.

"Tell us, dear stork," said Lucilla, "who is the owner of this beautiful palace and why is he so unhappy?"

The stork, however, only bowed his head and said nothing.

Then said Espriota, "If you are not allowed to speak, will you at least carry a letter from us thanking him for his great kindness, and asking if there is any way in which we may show our gratitude?"

The stork at once led the way to a little table on which were writing materials, and when Espriota had written the letter to her satisfaction he carried it away in his beak. Presently he came

back with a note, which he presented to the sisters with a low bow, and this is what they read:

“Fair and gentle maids, this palace, with all that is in it, is at your service, so long as you please to remain, and when you wish to depart, means will be found to convey you to your own land. For myself, no one can help me, for my case is hopeless. If, however, it would please you to hear the story of my misfortunes, I will relate them to you this evening after supper, but on no account must you see my face. Meanwhile, do whatsoever you desire and have no fear. There is nothing in the whole island that can do you harm.”

EsPRIOTA at once sent word by the stork that she and her sister would be in readiness whenever their kind host should send for them, and the rest of the day they spent walking in the gardens or examining the treasures in the palace, but all the time they were counting the hours till they should be sent for and could scarcely think or speak of anything else. Great was their delight, therefore, when after supper the stork approached and invited them to follow him to the terrace. There they found three chairs of state

and the stork motioned them to be seated, whereupon they were again entertained by a delightful concert of music which seemed to come from nowhere. It was almost dark, so they never noticed someone come and sit down in the third chair, and they both jumped when the music ceased and a voice said, "Gentle maids, I trust that all is well with you and that my servants have left nothing undone."

The two sisters at once rose and curtsied, but all they could see was the figure of a man muffled in a cloak with his face completely hidden. "Noble sir," said Lucilla, "we are much beholden to you for your goodness to us and our one desire is to serve you. We are two poor maids who have always worked hard for our living and known much trouble, but for every misfortune there is a remedy, and if you will tell us your story, who knows if we may not be able to help you?"

"Alas!" said the man, "I have lost all hope. I was once a prince of the Western Isles and as happy as the day is long, but I had the misfortune to incur the enmity of an evil magician who put such an enchantment on me that I was forced

to fly from my country and hide my face from sight, for I am so horribly changed that I am little better than a monster, and if I ventured near the dwelling-places of ordinary men they would set the very dogs upon me."

As he spoke the mantle slipped from his face and the moon suddenly came from behind a cloud and showed the unfortunate prince's features before he had time to hide them. He was the most dreadful sight it is possible to imagine! He had a great mouth which stretched from ear to ear and opened and shut like a fish's. His eyes were huge and goggled horribly, and while the sisters gasped with amazement, two big tears ran down his cheeks and fell into his enormous mouth with the curious sound which had startled them so much in the night. His ears were like two plates and he had hardly any nose at all; indeed, the boldest heart might have been dismayed at such a hideous sight.

EsPRIOTA, however, could not contain her indignation. "Oh, what a shameful thing thus to afflict a gallant prince!" she cried. "Sister, what can we do for this noble gentleman?"

"I have heard," said Lucilla, "that there is

nothing in the world that will not yield to valour. Come, sir, will you ride round the world with us in search of adventures? Who knows whether you may not win release from this dreadful enchantment as a reward for some knightly deed?"

"Well bethought!" said Espriota. "With a silken mask over your helm, you would look like any other bold knight riding to the wars. Tomorrow my sister and I will make you such a mask and we will go out into the world and try our fortunes."

"Gentle maids," cried the prince, "it shall be as you say, and blest be the day you set foot on this island to deliver me. The ship that brought you here is but little hurt and can easily be made as good as new. In a very few days all will be ready and we will start at once."

Next morning the two sisters fell to work and sewed a big mask of blue silk which completely covered the prince's head and neck, and could be worn over his helmet if he pleased. And when he had put it on and arrayed himself in full armour, he looked quite splendid and the sisters clapped their hands for joy.

Then they made haste to embark upon their ship and sail away for foreign lands. And as they went, the prince told them how, when the enchantment fell upon him and he was forced to leave his own land, his two faithful friends, the North Wind and the East Wind, gave him the beautiful island and one of their own palaces for his dwelling-place, and he had only to wish for a thing for it to appear. Nevertheless he was the wretchedest man alive till they came.

“We are rejoiced to have been of service to you,” said the sisters.

When they had sailed for a week and a day, they came to a fine country ruled over by a famous princess much praised for her beauty. The prince and the two sisters landed at once and, procuring three white horses, rode straight to the city where the princess was holding her court. There they found that a tournament was in progress, and the most famous knights were ranged in the lists, challenging all comers to prove their valour. They engaged in mimic battles, and the victor was to have a wreath of gold and a kiss from the Queen of Beauty, who was the princess herself.

The prince set his lance in rest and rode into the lists; a knight rode out to meet him and the contest began. Very soon the knight was unhorsed and the spectators cried, "The Masked Prince wins." Then other knights challenged the prince and were no more fortunate and at last even the greatest champions had to confess themselves beaten, and thereupon he was proclaimed Victor of the Tournament.

"Let the Prince unmask," said the princess, "and come and receive his reward." And though he protested and begged leave to depart, she would not permit it, and at last he unmasked and doffed his helm.

Then what a hubbub arose, to be sure! The ladies screamed, the dogs barked, the knights laughed, the people jeered and the princess went into hysterics. "Away, monster!" cried the heralds, but none dared to approach, for they were afraid. So the prince rode away with Espriota and Lucilla and soon left the city behind.

"Courage!" said Lucilla. "Do not despair. Perhaps we may have better luck next time."

The next kingdom they came to was all in

mourning and the people were as sad as sad could be. The prince and the two sisters rode into the chief city and enquired for lodgings at the inn.

“Alas!” cried mine host. “This is no place for gallant knights and gentle ladies; get you gone as quickly as you may. There is a dreadful giant in the land who takes our eldest sons one by one and makes them into broth.”

“Is there so?” cried the prince. “I will cook his broth for him before I am a day older.”

“Right valiant sir,” quoth mine host, “if you can do so much, the king will give you the hand of his daughter in marriage and the half of his kingdom to boot.”

“That remains to be seen,” said the prince, and when he had made sure that Lucilla and Espriota were well lodged and waited on, he retired to his chamber and would say no more.

Next morning he rose early and, enquiring where the giant was to be found, rode out into the country. He soon descried him in the distance heating his pot over an immense fire; all around lay the bones of the poor people he had made into broth, and near at hand was a great

pile of fir trees which the giant had pulled up to serve as fuel. The prince concealed his horse in a thicket and, drawing near the fire, took off his mask and fanned himself.

"My goodness me!" cried the giant, nearly dumb with astonishment. "Whatever sort of thing is this?"

"Why do you always have broth?" said the prince, opening his great mouth very wide and looking more like a fish than ever.

"Because there is usually nothing else," said the giant in a terrible voice. "But this morning I think I will begin with fish."

"But you cannot eat fish without sauce," said the prince. "Do you know how to make the best sauce?"

"No," said the giant. "And since I may as well enjoy you if I eat you, you shall tell me how to make it."

"Very well," said the prince. "But it is a great secret; you must let me whisper it in your ear."

"Come on, then," said the giant, sitting down and allowing the prince to clamber up his back. When the prince got on his shoulder, he drew

his sword, seized hold of a tuft of whisker to steady himself and shouted in the giant's ear, "The best way to make sauce is this!" Then he plunged his sword through the giant's ear into his wicked brain and he fell dead.

When the prince had put on his mask again he rode back to the city and told the people they had nothing more to fear. And then he was for riding quietly off to the next kingdom, but the king would not let him depart.

"The half of my kingdom and my daughter for wife are yours," he said, and sent for the princess and bade her prepare for the wedding at once.

"Stay!" cried the prince. "The princess may not be willing to wed me." And thereupon he unmasked and as soon as the princess beheld him she fell on the floor in a swoon, and the king hid his face in his robes.

"Sire!" said the prince, "I release you from your promise. Comfort your daughter and be assured you will never see me again."

Then he rode away with Lucilla and Espriota and soon left the city behind.

"Courage!" cried Espriota. "So far you have

won great honour and renown, if nothing else. Who knows if next time we may not be more fortunate? The third time pays for all."

"Kind and gentle maids," said the prince, "with you to cheer me on I need never despair. Let us ride on."

They soon reached the confines of the next kingdom and just before they entered it they found a grove of rowan trees and a wise man living all by himself in a little hut built of rowan wood.

"Good day to you," quoth the wise man. "If it be your intention to enter the next kingdom, tarry here awhile and I will tell you what you are likely to find there, and perchance you will choose rather to ride elsewhere."

"Say on, wise man," said the prince.

"It is the most miserable country in the world," said the wise man, "for it is in the power of a horrible sorceress who came hither in the guise of a suppliant beseeching protection. And when our princess befriended her, she repaid her kindness by putting a spell upon her and established herself on the throne beside her."



*"A wise man living all by himself in a little hut built of
rowan wood."*

"Why has no one slain the sorceress?" asked Espriota.

"Because of her cunning," said the wise man. "She has actually changed herself by her enchantments so that she looks exactly like our own princess and they cannot be told one from the other. So he who would slay the sorceress fears to slay his sovereign by mistake, and thus she bides safe in her ill-gotten gains. As for the real princess she has no power to speak so much as a single word of her own will, and the sorceress sits by her side, eats at the same board, sleeps in the same bed and never lets her out of her sight."

"Unhappy lady!" cried the prince. "Here is one even more wretched than myself. I swear I will deliver her."

"Well said, well said!" cried the two sisters, and "Well said!" cried the old man. "And if you are indeed in earnest," he added, "here is a small sword which is proof against all enchantments and which will slay even a witch. I do not need it here, for no spell can touch me while I stay in my grove of rowan trees. So good luck go with you, but be careful ye do not harm the

true princess, for she is as good as she is beautiful."

"She shall come to no harm," said the prince.

"And be not deceived by fair words and sweet looks," said the wise man. "For all the sorceress's words are fair and all her deeds are black. Moreover, she is served by a dragon whom she allows to ravage the land and keep the people in terror and subjection."

Then they entered the kingdom and hastened towards the city. As they rode they saw the wretched people peep at them from holes in the earth where they had hidden on account of the dragon, and everywhere was waste and desolation. As they neared the city, however, they heard music and saw banners flying on the walls and a procession coming from the gate to meet them.

"Greeting to the Masked Prince and his fair companions," said a tall knight who rode at the head of the procession. "Tidings of your prowess have reached the court, and I am bidden to conduct you to the presence of our sovereign ladies without delay."

"A fair greeting to you, sir," answered the

prince. "Lead on." So they rode to the city in great state and were escorted with much honour to the throne room of the palace. And in spite of what the wise man had told them, the two sisters and the prince could hardly believe their eyes, for sitting on the throne were two of the most beautiful ladies it is possible to imagine and it was impossible to tell the false princess from the true one. Both had long golden hair and dark eyes, and complexions like lilies and roses; they were both the same height and very slender and there is no denying that they had the sweetest faces in the world.

"Greeting to you, gentle ladies," said the prince.

"And to you, valiant sir," said the false princess. "I have heard of your knightly deeds and am in great hope that you have come to deliver this unhappy land from the dragon which ravages it." And no one, hearing her, could have believed she had a wicked heart and did not mean what she said.

"I trust that I may indeed do you some such service," said the prince. "But before I make the attempt I must crave a boon."

"Say on," said the false princess graciously. Meanwhile the real princess was unable to say a single word.

"As the fee for my services," said the prince, "I beg that one of you gracious ladies will bestow upon me a kiss."

"Not so!" said the false princess, feigning to be reluctant. "Such a reward must come after the deed; and then, if you are successful you may claim one of us in marriage." And this she said, feeling assured that the dragon would devour the prince, whom she meant to render helpless by her spells.

"Nay," said the prince. "But the kiss must come first." And thereupon he fell upon one knee and unmasked.

When the false princess saw his face she screamed for help. "Away, monster!" she said. "I see you have no stomach for the fight, since you demand such a fee for your services. Well you know that no lady would ever bestow it."

But the real princess thought in her heart, "I believe this ugly prince is both good and wise, for he knows that a good ruler would sell herself into slavery if thereby she might deliver her

people from misery. And he has proposed this boon as a test." And quick as thought she rose in her seat and kissed the prince, not once but thrice, and as she did so, lo and behold! his hideous face changed in the twinkling of an eye and he stood upon his feet as handsome a prince as ever breathed.

"Now I know which is the true princess," he cried, and seizing the sorceress he drew his sword and slew her before she could escape.

Then who can describe how joyful they all were? The princess embraced Lucilla and Espriota, and thanked the prince with tears in her eyes for delivering her. He, for his part, could hardly believe he was freed from his own horrible enchantment and, falling on his knees, swore to serve the princess all the days of his life. As for the courtiers, they were beside themselves with happiness, while the citizens rang the bells as though they were mad, and the cooks started baking and roasting in preparation for a banquet such as no one had ever seen since they were born.

In the midst of the rejoicings the prince cried, "Stay! There is still the dragon to be slain,"

when a messenger burst into the palace with the news that the dragon was no more. It had disappeared in a puff of smoke and flame when the sorceress died, being indeed no more than one of her evil enchantments.

The next day the prince and the princess were wedded with great solemnity and the utmost rejoicing. The North Wind and the East Wind came to the ceremony and their wives with them; as for Lucilla and Espriota, no one could do enough for them and they were given the chief seats of honour everywhere.

“Ask what you will of us and it shall be yours, even to the half of our kingdom,” said the prince and princess.

Then Lucilla asked that the beautiful island where they first found the prince might be given to her and her sister for their very own, and everyone cried, “Agreed! Agreed!” So they went to live in the palace with their friend the stork, and had all the Winds and the prince and the princess to visit them. So they all lived happily ever after.

The Talisman

THE talisman upon my heart
Will keep me safe from wizard's spell,
And tame the dragon fierce who guards
With fiery breath the wishing well.
A fairy hung it round my neck:
"Go to the Dragon's Well," said she,
"And boldly ask what most you lack,
"And you shall have your wishes three."

The Princess Dyonetia

ONCE upon a time there was a king who had seven children, who were all of the most troublesome and turbulent disposition with the exception of his eldest daughter. She, however, was all that one would wish a princess to be, for she was as good as gold and as fair as the day. Her name was Princess Dyonetia, and when she rode out in her coach and six all the people shouted "Hurrah!" and threw their caps in the air for pleasure; so one would have expected that she would have been as happy as the day is long. But the fact is that, though she never got into mischief on her own account, whenever one of her brothers or sisters found themselves in trouble they always came to her to get them out of it. And as one or another of them was always in mischief, she usually had her hands full.

One day the Crown Prince came to her and

said: "Dyonetia, am I a man or am I not? My father refuses to let me accompany the embassy which is going to the next kingdom to choose for me a bride, and I vow I will not submit to it. I am resolved to run away in disguise this very night and find a bride for myself."

Then said Dyonetia, "Be patient, brother, and I will see what can be done." But the old king would listen to no persuasion. "It is useless, Dyonetia," he said. "I will hear no arguments. I am growing old, the kingdom is in danger of war with the King of the Stony Lands, with whom your two youngest brothers have quarrelled, and the Crown Prince must stay and defend us at the head of the army."

When Dyonetia returned to her eldest brother's apartments, however, he was nowhere to be found and it soon became plain that he had done as he had threatened and run away in disguise. There was terrible commotion at the palace when this was discovered, and in the middle of the turmoil messengers arrived bringing news that a great army had been sighted marching over the passes from the direction of the Kingdom of the Stony Lands.

“Quick,” said Dyonetia. “Let my coach be got ready and sufficient men-at-arms prepare to accompany me. I myself will meet the invader and see if I cannot make him listen to reason.” Thereupon there was great joy and everybody shouted harder than ever, “Long live the Princess Dyonetia!”

In a very short time the coach was at the door, the escort in readiness, and the princess was ready to start. She embraced her father, begged her brothers and sisters to get into no more mischief until her return and rode away, followed by the shouts of the populace.

The enemy was reported to be halted high up among the hills, so the coach at once took the mountain road and at nightfall reached the camp of the invader. The sentries on the road cried, “Halt!” and bade the coachman give up the reins, but when the princess put her head out of the coach and enquired for the King of the Stony Lands they at once presented arms and bade her drive straight on and take the first turning to the left.

The king was at supper when word was brought to him of Dyonetia’s arrival and he at

once made haste to receive her with all due respect, for he was naturally a most courteous monarch. He helped her to alight from her coach and instantly asked what he could do for her.

"Return to your own land," said Dyonetia, "and I will pledge my word as a princess that in less than a month my two brothers shall present themselves at your court and make up their quarrel with you! Moreover, each shall come at the head of a picked body of men to assist you in ridding your own kingdom of the bands of robbers which now infest it. So will you ensure peace and prosperity to yourself, and my brothers will gain experience and knightly renown."

"O wise and beautiful princess," said the king, "let your brothers do as you have said. But before I stir a step out of this kingdom I demand that they meet me here and pledge their honour not to provoke me further."

At that moment a young gentleman clad in a suit of amethyst and silver with a diamond in his cap, whom no one had noticed before, stepped forward and said: "Good! Coachman, away with you and bring back the princes before break of day." And as though he were bewitched, the

coachman immediately cracked his whip, round turned the horses and away went the coach and cavalcade, leaving the princess standing there all alone in the camp of the enemy.

“What have you done, jackanapes?” said the king angrily. “What is to become of the princess? I have nothing here fit for a lady.”

“As to that, do not disturb yourself,” said the young gentleman. “My grandmother’s house is close at hand, and I am here for the express purpose of conducting the princess thither.” With that he offered his hand to Dyonetia with a bow, and she was so bewildered that, scarcely knowing what she did, she placed her hand in his and allowed him to lead her up the road. All at once he turned aside, followed a little path for a few steps and stopped at the foot of an enormous precipice which towered above them and completely blocked the way.

“Now,” said the young gentleman, stepping behind Dyonetia and placing the palms of his hands under her elbows, “up we go!” and the next instant she found herself running up the face of the precipice as easily as if it were a flight of stairs, and before she realized it she was stand-

ing at the very top of a solitary pinnacle which towered above all the mountains and overlooked the whole world.

"Oh!" cried Dyonetia. "How dare you behave like this? Be so good as to remember that I am a royal princess and take me to your grandmother at once."

The young gentleman, however, did not appear at all disturbed but reached up his hand and picked a little star out of the sky. "Charming princess," he said, "do not be angry with me, but wear this in your hair. And now shut your eyes, for going down precipices is more disturbing than going up them." And the next instant he had picked her up as easily as a feather and started to descend on the further side. How he did it she never knew; she was obliged to shut her eyes, for she could not bear to look; however, in a very little while she felt herself gently set on her feet and when she opened her eyes she was standing before an open door set in the side of the mountain, and there was a most handsome old lady dressed all in grey silk with countless diamonds on her fingers, waiting to welcome her.

"I am most happy to see you, my dear," said

the old lady, "and I trust this scapegrace has behaved himself and conducted you hither with all courtesy."

"I am obliged to you, madam," said Dyonetia, making a deep curtsy, "but I cannot approve of your grandson's way of travelling. I have been up one precipice and down another, and how I have escaped being dashed to pieces I cannot understand."

"I am ashamed of you, grandson," said the old lady. "Retire to your own house." And though the young gentleman begged to be allowed to stay to supper at least, she led Dyonetia within and shut the door upon him. The whole mountain was the old lady's house and it was a most wonderful place; moreover, wherever they went there was the sound of music, for she possessed the finest organ in the world, and an invisible musician was playing so sweetly that Dyonetia could have listened to it for ever.

"I do not know how to thank you for your hospitality," said the princess. "And I am sorry to appear ungrateful to your grandson for bringing me here, but I am not accustomed to preci-

pices, and I quite forgot how much I was indebted to him."

"He is a most shocking scapegrace," said the old lady, "and deserves no thanks. Now you shall sup with me and afterward I will conduct you to your room."

So after she had supped, Dyonetia was shown a beautiful little room with a couch softer than the softest down; and there she slept until break of day.

In the morning she was roused by the sound of music which filled the whole mountain, and rising at once, she dressed quickly and breakfasted with the old lady. While they were still at table, there was a tremendous banging at the door and a frightful clatter on the stairs and the next instant the young gentleman burst into the room in the best of spirits and evidently very pleased with himself.

"Good morning, grandmother," he said. "Your servant, princess. It is all right; I have arranged everything. I met your coach on the road and introduced myself to your brothers, who were most alarmed as to your safety. I was able to

reassure them and invited them both to breakfast at my house in the solitary pinnacle.”

“Good gracious!” cried Dyonetia. “Did you take them up that horrible precipice?”

“Yes,” said the young gentleman, “and down again. They are both capital fellows and as for shutting their eyes, they would not have dreamed of it. And now, we are only waiting for your presence to conclude this affair with the King of the Stony Lands.”

“Very well, grandson,” said the old lady, rising. “Lead the way, but no precipices this time, for I am coming with Dyonetia. We will use my private way.” So the young gentleman went before them into a long gallery which led right through the mountain and came out on the other side; and when they stepped out into the open air, there was Dyonetia’s coach and six with the men-at-arms in attendance, and the two young princes, who were overjoyed to see her quite safe and sound. Dyonetia presented them to the old lady, who greeted them very graciously, and then they all entered the coach and sought the camp of the King of the Stony Lands.

They were received with great honour, for the

king had conceived such an admiration for Dyonetia's beauty and wisdom that he was determined not to remain at enmity with her father's kingdom a moment longer than was necessary; so, as everybody was in the best possible humour and all were most anxious to oblige one another, matters were soon arranged as the princess had suggested and peace was declared. It was settled that Dyonetia should take the two princes home with her to collect their baggage and get together the picked men to march against the robber bands; while as for the King of the Stony Lands, he struck his camp and began to march his troops back to his own kingdom there and then.

The old lady parted from Dyonetia with great regret. "Come and see me again, dear child," she said. "Whenever you want me, come to this spot and rap on the mountain three times."

So the princess kissed her, and thanked the young gentleman very kindly for his help. Then she got into her coach and rode away to the city, where the populace received her with the ringing of bells and shouts of joy.

However, there was no time to waste in fes-

tivities, for the embassy had departed in search of a bride for the Crown Prince, and the prince himself must be found at all costs. Messengers were despatched in haste to all quarters of the world and nothing was left undone; however, no tidings could be found of him, and Dyonetia did not know which way to turn. Moreover, her three sisters were so jealous of the wonderful star the young gentleman of the solitary pinnacle had given her that they made her life unbearable. So as soon as she had heard from her two youngest brothers that they had arrived safely at the court of the King of the Stony Lands, Dyonetia resolved to go out into the world and seek her eldest brother herself. She called her second brother, who was now the only prince left at home, and commended her father and the kingdom to his care; then she took the star out of her hair and bade him allow her sisters to wear it in turn while she went on a visit to the Old Lady of the Mountains. The prince promised to be prudent and good, and to take the greatest care of the wonderful star, for Dyonetia said, "I would not have it lost for the world."

Then she started on her journey. She did not



"She did not go by coach this time, . . . but on foot."

go by coach this time, but dressed herself plainly in a dark cloak and hood and set off along the road on foot. It was night; in the distance she could see a bright star just over the solitary pinnacle and she wondered if the young gentleman were at home. However, she had no wish at all to go up and down the precipice again and she felt very glad indeed she had dressed herself so plainly and was not likely to be recognized. What then was her annoyance when she saw the young gentleman himself hurrying down the road to meet her. She looked all around for somewhere to hide, but the road was steep and narrow and there was not so much as a large boulder to get behind, and in the darkness it was not easy to see if she had reached the entrance to the old lady's private way through the mountain. However, she hastily rapped three times on the side of the mountain and immediately a door opened in the rock, so Dyonetia stepped in and the door shut behind her.

She was overjoyed to find herself in the old lady's private way and to hear the invisible musician playing the most entrancing melodies as if to welcome her. She hurried along into the

heart of the mountain and soon found the old lady reading a wonderful book containing the adventures of all the heroes that ever lived.

"I have come to beg the favour of a night's lodging," said Dyonetia. "I am on my way out into the world to look for my eldest brother, who has disappeared at the very moment when he is most wanted, and I thought perhaps you could give me some advice."

"Certainly," said the old lady. "As soon as we have had supper I will consult my magic mirror and no doubt I shall soon find out where he is."

At that moment there was a most tremendous clatter and the young gentleman from the solitary pinnacle burst into the room crying, "I have lost the princess!"

"What do you mean, grandson?" said the old lady sternly. "Do you not see the princess before you?"

"Why, bless my soul alive," cried the young gentleman, "so she is! Most gracious princess, I saw you from afar and hurried to place myself at your service, and all in a moment you vanished."

"I am in search of my brother," said Dyonetia,

"and I turned aside to ask advice and a night's lodging from your grandmother."

At that the young gentleman fell on one knee. "Fairest Dyonetia," he said, "why should you run about the world looking for your brother? Marry me and come and live in the solitary pinnacle and you shall have no more trouble as long as you live."

"I am much obliged to you," said Dyonetia, "but I cannot possibly abandon my search, and moreover you know quite well that I cannot get up and down precipices by myself."

"Quite right," said the old lady. "My grandson has no sense. All the same, I wish you could have taken him in hand, for he is a shocking scapegrace and needs keeping in order." Then she sent for her magic mirror and gazed in it very earnestly for a long time. At length she said: "The prince is alive and well, but he has not found a bride to please him. At this moment he is three hundred leagues away, sleeping under a mulberry bush in the third kingdom from here. In the morning I will put you on the right road and I hope you will soon catch up with him."

So they all had supper together and then the

young gentleman departed to his own house and Dyonetia stayed the night with the old lady and slept on a couch softer than the softest down. In the morning she was awakened to the sound of music as before, and as soon as they had breakfasted the old lady took her to the door of the mountain and put her on the right road.

The princess had not gone very far, however, when someone came sliding down the side of the mountain at a terrible rate and landed on the road before her with a plump, and as soon as the dust had cleared away she saw it was the young gentleman from the solitary pinnacle again. He hastily dusted himself down and made a most elegant bow.

“Gracious princess,” he said, “pray excuse my haste, but I have good news for you; your brother is safe and sound in my house. I only just had time to take him by the scruff of his neck and drop him inside before hurrying off to stop you; for I feared I might miss you and then you would have had a toilsome journey for nothing.”

“You are very good,” said Dyonetia, “but I wish you would reflect before you do such things.

I must see my brother at once and how am I to mount that terrible precipice again?"

"If you will give me your hand and trust me," said the young gentleman, "it will not be the slightest trouble in the world."

So the princess gave him her hand, and sure enough she ran up the side of the mountain as easily as walking upstairs and the precipice was no trouble at all. In an incredibly short space of time she found herself again standing on the top of the solitary pinnacle and then she noticed that just at her feet was a neat trap-door with a brass plate inscribed with the word "Knock."

The young gentleman raised the trap-door and Dyonetia looked within and saw a long ladder going down perfectly straight inside the mountain for a couple of hundred feet, and at the bottom was the Crown Prince, sitting on the lowest rungs and looking very disconsolate.

"Do you mind coming up?" shouted the young gentleman. "Your sister is waiting for you." So the Crown Prince clambered up the ladder and hastened to embrace her.

"Now that is what I call a good night's work," said the young gentleman to Dyonetia. "I

warrant the Crown Prince never travelled so fast in his life before. All the same, much remains to be done. On my way to the third kingdom I found time to turn aside and discover how the embassy sent by your royal father to choose a bride for the prince was getting on, and I hear that they are entirely unable to decide which of the king's four daughters is the fairest and of the most amiable disposition. So your brother had better borrow a suit of my best clothes and go down without delay and choose for himself."

This exactly suited the Crown Prince, who vowed the young gentleman was a capital fellow and quite forgave him for taking him by the scruff of his neck and whisking him over the mountains. So he made himself very smart in a suit of grey and silver and at once proceeded to the next kingdom, and how he did it I cannot tell, but the moment he set eyes upon the princesses he knew which was the fairest and sweetest and chose himself a bride to his own and everybody's satisfaction.

Meanwhile Dyonetia had gone home to prepare for the wedding and as soon as she reached her father's palace and the shouts of the populace

would allow her to hear herself speak she asked her brother and sisters for her star. Thereupon her sisters turned very red and the prince looked very glum and said, "To-morrow." The next day she asked for it again and got the same answer, and though each succeeding day she begged her brother and sisters to give it back to her, they always said, "To-morrow," nor did she so much as set eyes upon it. At last the wedding day of the Crown Prince arrived and Dyonetia said, "I must positively wear my star at the ball to-night." But when the evening came, the young prince sought her out and said: "O Dyonetia, how will you ever forgive me? The evening you went away I and my sisters were in a boat on the lake when a dispute arose as to which should wear the star first, and while they wrangled the eldest, who had it at the moment, let it fall into the waters of the lake and all our efforts to recover it have failed."

Then Dyonetia burst into tears and ran out of the palace and through the garden to the margin of the lake. It was night time and the stars were shining and the fiddles in the palace were tuning up for the ball, but Dyonetia did not listen to

them but hastily jumped into the boat she found lying moored, and cast off and rowed out into the lake. Every now and then she stopped and gazed into the water, and at last she saw her star lying at the bottom of the lake and shining like a big diamond, but the water was very deep indeed and it was quite out of reach. So she laid her head on her knees and cried bitterly.

What was her astonishment when she heard a tiny voice say, "Princess, why do you weep?" She turned her head and there was a big water-lily close to her boat and seated among the petals was a little water fairy.

"O gentle fairy," said Dyonetia, "I am weeping because I cannot recover my star which is lying at the bottom of the lake."

Then said the fairy: "I cannot raise it myself because it is too heavy for me; and I have no power over the gifts of the Mountain Folk, else would I charm it to me through the water. But if you have the courage to step into my lily, I will make you small enough and you shall go down to the bottom of the lake inside the lily and pick up your jewel yourself."

Without a moment's hesitation, Dyonetia

stepped into the water-lily and found herself so small that she was able to sit down comfortably. The fairy then bade her farewell and instantly the petals of the lily closed over her; the flower bent on its long green stalk and plunged down through the waters to the bed of the lake. There it opened for an instant to allow Dyonetia to seize her star, then again closed its petals tightly and tried to return to the surface; but alas! Dyonetia and the star together were so heavy that the lily could not raise its head above the water again, and there is no doubt that Dyonetia would have been drowned had it not been for the young gentleman from the solitary pinnacle. He had come down to the ball for the express purpose of dancing with her and not seeing her had gone into the garden in search of her. He was just in time to see her step into the water-lily and disappear from sight, and when she did not reappear he flung himself into another boat, rowed across the lake at the top of his speed, dived into the water and lifted the lily flower to the surface. The petals of the lily at once unclosed and there was Dyonetia clasping the star to her bosom and quite unharmed.

The young gentleman lifted her into the boat, where she at once regained her natural size, and he rowed back to the shore. "There is another good suit of clothes ruined," he said, as he helped her to land. "However, your brother owes me a suit and he must lend me the best he has, for I am determined we will be married this very night."

Then said Dyonetia: "You have saved my life and gone to endless trouble for me. I can refuse you nothing." So they were wedded and went to dwell in the solitary pinnacle, where they lived happily ever after.

As for Dyonetia's brothers and sisters, they were so delighted to have her safe and sound that they gave up getting into mischief and behaved themselves for the rest of their lives; while as for the young gentleman, Dyonetia found him no trouble at all and they loved each other dearly. The princess soon became accustomed to the precipices; however, her husband had a private way made into the solitary pinnacle exactly like the old lady's so that she and Dyonetia might visit each other every day. And if you are ever in that part of the world whence you

can see the solitary pinnacle and if you happen to see two stars just above the summit one fine night, you will know that it is Dyonetia and the young gentleman come out to take the air.

Raspberry Tarts

THE elves are kneading the finest dough,
The bakers are baking with all their hearts;
There's a little girl coming to Fairyland,
And she must have raspberry tarts.



The flour is the whitest, the jam past compare—
On the making we lavished our arts:
When little girls visit in Fairyland,
They always have raspberry tarts.

The raspberries grew on a wonderful isle
Not marked on the sailor men's charts;
The wheat grew in Egypt beside the old Nile
Expressly for making these tarts.

So raspberry tarts,
Raspberry tarts,
She shall have raspberry tarts!

The Fairy Shoemaker

JUST inside one of the woods of Fairyland there lives a shoemaker who makes the finest shoes in the world. It is not generally known that the wood is part of the fairy dominions, for it is quite on the outskirts of Fairyland—there are no gates or barriers or sign-boards of any sort and there is a right of way through it for all kinds of folk. Nevertheless, it is enchanted from end to end.

The shoemaker's house is the first thing you come to as you enter the wood and if you are wise you will go in at once and order a pair of shoes. Some people, however, are so stupid that they never even see it, and so miss a good opportunity.

One day a young man who was seeking his fortune passed that way; he was very poorly dressed and possessed nothing in the world but a good heart, six pennies and his five wits. He

at once espied the shoemaker's house and, going to the door, asked him to be so good as to knock a few nails into the soles of his shoes, just to prevent them from falling to pieces altogether. "Willingly," said the shoemaker, examining the shoes, "but you had better let me make you a new pair, for though these have been very good in their day, they are almost worn out."

"I would gladly do so if I could afford it," said the young man, "but I have only sixpence in the world. Just knock in a few nails for me, and you shall have twopence."

"Very well," said the shoemaker, and bade him sit down and give him all the news while he hammered at the shoes. When they were ready, the young man thanked him and gave him two pennies, which the shoemaker spun three times in the air before he laid them on the table.

"Why, bless my soul!" said the shoemaker, "you must be a very wealthy young gentleman. These two pennies of yours are made of gold. Now you will be obliged to let me make you a new pair of shoes, for I have no change and that is the only way we can be quits." So the young man let him take his measurements and prom-



*"Just inside one of the woods of Fairyland there lives
a shoemaker."*

ised to call again in three days' time, when they would be ready; meanwhile the shoemaker advised him to go on his way through the wood and look for a charcoal burner's hut where the people would be very glad indeed to take him in and entertain him handsomely for three days for another of his pennies. So the young man thanked him very much and went on his way feeling very astonished and inclined to believe that he had taken leave of his wits.

He had not long been gone before the shoemaker heard a tremendous banging at his door; and when he opened it there stood a very important alderman who was travelling to town, where he expected to be made Lord Mayor. The alderman was in a very bad temper and he bounced into the house without saying so much as "Good day."

"You must make me a new pair of shoes without an instant's delay," he said. "My coach has been upset in the ditch and I have lost my best pair of shoes in the mire. I will give you five crowns for a new pair."

"I am sorry," said the shoemaker, "but I am engaged upon an order for a very distinguished

and wealthy patron who has just left me, and I can do nothing until his wants are attended to. If you can wait three days, I will do my best to oblige you."

"I will not wait three hours," said the alderman, "and if you refuse to do as I bid, I will have your house pulled down over your ears."

The shoemaker, however, insisted that he could do nothing for three days and the alderman was just going away in a rage when he spied the two golden pennies lying on the table.

"What is all this money lying about loose?" he asked.

"Oh," said the shoemaker, "that is only twopence my patron gave me for my services."

"Hah!" said the alderman. "Well, one penny is as good as another, I suppose." So saying, he slipped the two golden pennies into his pocket and put two ordinary ones in their place. Then he hastily left the house, thinking the shoemaker had noticed nothing. As soon as he had gone, however, the shoemaker took the coins he had left and spun them three times in the air and when he laid them on the table they were both made of lead.

"Base metal, base metal!" said the shoemaker, spinning the coins in the air again. When he laid them on the table once more they were pure gold. "That is better," he said. "Now the base metal is gone where it belongs and I have got my own again." Then he went on making the young man's shoes.

Meanwhile the alderman had returned to the inn where he had left his coach and at once sent for the innkeeper. "That insolent rascal of a cobbler who lives in the wood refuses to make my shoes," he said. "Procure me another shoemaker without an instant's delay and then send me six stout fellows to take my orders, for I have business to do."

The innkeeper promised to send at once to the nearest town for the best shoemaker that could be found, and then called six of his serving-men and bade them attend to his guest's wants.

"This is what you have to do," said the alderman when they presented themselves before him. "Take ropes and hatchets and billets of wood and proceed at once to the house of the cobbler who lives in the wood. Pull his dwelling

down about his ears, and you shall have two pieces of gold for your trouble.”

The serving-men, however, utterly refused to do any such thing, saying the shoemaker had never done them any harm and moreover pulling down houses was not their business. Then the alderman tried the grooms and ostlers and even the cooks and the scullions, but they one and all refused to lift so much as a finger against the old shoemaker, though the alderman raged and fumed and threatened to do terrible things if his orders were not obeyed. At last he was obliged to send his own servant back along the road to his country house to fetch a number of bold ruffians whom he kept in his employ and who would not scruple to do whatever he told them. But as it was impossible for his servant to do the journey there and back in less than two days, the alderman was obliged to remain there for that time, so he consoled himself by living on the fat of the land and ordered himself a smart pair of red leather shoes from the fashionable shoemaker whom the innkeeper had fetched from the nearest town.

Now the king of that country was a widower

who had married again. His first wife had left him one fair daughter, who was as good and beautiful as could be. The king loved her very dearly and he thought he would take a second wife so that his daughter might have a mother to take care of her and teach her everything that a princess ought to know. But alas! the new queen was bad tempered and of a jealous and haughty disposition, and she made the princess so unhappy that at last she determined to run away. Before she started out on her way through the world, however, she determined to procure a pair of stout shoes which would wear well and be less noticeable than the golden slippers which she always wore and which were all her wardrobe contained. So one fine morning she borrowed her nurse's old cloak to hide her fine dress and slipped out of the city when the sentries were not looking. She hastened along the high road intending to go at once to the shoemaker in the woods, for her nurse, who was a very wise woman, had told her that he made the very best shoes that could be found.

On her way, however, she passed the inn where the alderman was staying, and feeling

very hungry and thirsty, she pulled the hood of her cloak well over her face and going to the door called for bread and cheese and a drink of water to be brought to her under the trees outside. While she was sitting on the bench eating her bread and cheese she saw six burly ruffians come down the road and enter the inn, and she asked the serving-man who attended to her who they might be.

"They are the minions of a high and mighty alderman who is lodging here," said the man. "And if I had my way, master and men should be ducked in the pond, for they intend mischief to the shoemaker who lives in the wood, though he never did them any harm; and they mean to pull his house about his ears."

"Say you so?" said the princess. "Here is a piece of silver for your pains." And not waiting for another mouthful, she sprang up and hurried along the path to the wood as fast as she could go. She ran and ran and as soon as she reached the wood there was the shoemaker's house looking so trim and neat that it was a pleasure to see it.

The princess rapped on the door and the shoe-



"The Princess rapped on the door."

maker bade her enter. "Ah!" said he as she stepped inside, "pure gold this time."

"You are quite right," said the princess. "My slippers are made of the finest gold, but I have not come to speak about that. Fly for your life, for the servants of the alderman are coming to pull your house about your ears."

"Let them come," said the shoemaker. "They will never find me, and there are more ways of hiding than running away. Now pray be seated, my dear young lady, and let me measure you for a new pair of shoes."

"Very well," said the princess. "Since you will not be persuaded I will stay here, and when these rascals come I will speak to them! Perhaps when they see who I am they will think twice before they meddle with you."

The shoemaker said nothing but began to measure the princess's foot, which, he said, was the prettiest ever seen, and while he was busy writing down the measurement in his book the princess looked out of the window and saw the six ruffians coming along the path through the wood. They were gazing all round them, looking earnestly this way and that, and the princess

could not believe her eyes, for they did not seem to see the house at all but walked right past it and continued their search further on.

“I told you they would not find me,” said the old shoemaker. “Come and sit in my porch and watch them, and I promise you fine sport. But do not go beyond the garden, for you would at once be seen and that would never do.”

So the princess sat in the shoemaker’s porch and ate bread and honey and berries and cream which he brought her, while she watched the six ruffians searching the wood and laughed till the tears ran down her face. For these rascals were determined to earn their gold pieces and hunted high and low; and they fell over tree stumps and tore themselves with brambles and got stuck all over with prickles and sank up to their knees in mossy swamps and grew steadily redder and redder in the face with their exertions. One even climbed a tree to get a better look-out, but a branch snapped under his weight and the rascal came down with a thump.

And while the fun was at its height the young man came through the wood to fetch his new pair of shoes, and he had no difficulty at all in

seeing the shoemaker's house, but marched straight up to the door and made a low bow to the princess sitting in the porch.

"You come in the very nick of time," said the shoemaker. "Someone must escort the princess back to the palace and protect her from those rascals prowling about yonder, and you are the very man for the job."

"Nothing could give me greater pleasure," said the young man, and then he tried on the new shoes, which fitted like a miracle.

"Yours will be ready in three days' time," said the shoemaker to the princess, "and I will do myself the honour to wait upon you at the palace and see how they fit."

"Do not trouble yourself," said the young man. "I owe you far more than I can ever repay and I will call for the shoes and deliver them for you. As for fitting, I will wager my last penny they will fit like a glove."

"Please yourself," said the old shoemaker; then he bade them both good-speed and they stepped out upon the path. They had not gone a dozen steps when there was a shout and the six

ruffians came running up and demanded to know if they had seen the shoemaker's house.

"Why, there it stands as plain as the nose on your face," said the young man, pointing to the house. "Where?" cried the men. "Do not make game of us, or we will give you a sound drubbing and run off with your sweetheart."

"Unmannerly varlets," cried the young man in a rage, "this will teach you manners!" And thereupon he knocked the six ruffians into a bed of blackberry brambles one after another like a row of ninepins. Then he offered his arm to the princess and escorted her safely home to the palace.

Meanwhile the alderman was preparing to continue his journey, for he was most impatient to be made Lord Mayor, and when the host presented his bill he untied the wallet in which he kept his gold and prepared to count out the money. What was his consternation to find that every single coin was turned to lead! Filled with horror he emptied the pocket in which he kept his silver, and lo and behold! the silver was also turned to lead. In desperation he turned out all the pockets in which he kept his copper coins,

and every penny piece was lead too. Then he bethought himself of the two golden pennies he had stolen from the shoemaker; he had put them by themselves in his breast pocket to bring him luck, so what was his dismay when he laid them on the table to find his lucky pennies were as leaden as all the rest.

"I have been robbed!" he cried. "Oh, miserable man that I am! Some rascal has stolen my good money and put base metal in its place."

"That is a likely story," said the innkeeper. "We are all honest people here and would scorn to touch what is not our own."

Just then the fashionable shoemaker, who had delivered the new shoes and was waiting for his bill to be settled, came into the room and asked that he might be paid, as he was anxious to return to his shop, which he had left to mind itself.

"Here is a nice state of affairs," said mine host. "This fine fellow has been living on the fat of the land for three days, besides breathing all manner of threats against an innocent man who never did him an injury, and when he is asked to pay his just debts he has nothing but base metal!"

“Oho!” said the other man. “And am I not to be paid for my leather and labour? Let us duck him in the horsepond.”

“With all my heart!” said the innkeeper; and in spite of the alderman’s entreaties, the innkeeper called his men and he was well ducked and then told to take himself off about his business.

“As for your coach and horses,” said the innkeeper, “you may have them and welcome, for I have no doubt you have stolen them, and I would not keep them in my stables even to pay your debts.”

So the horses were harnessed to the coach and the alderman was bundled inside all wet and dripping as he was, and his servant drove him straight home, for there was no use thinking of being a Lord Mayor when he was all covered in duck weed and had not so much as an honest penny in his pocket.

He had not been gone long, however, when the six ruffians whom he had sent to the wood to pull the shoemaker’s house about his ears returned to the inn convinced that they had been sent on a wild goose chase, for they had

been unable to find any trace of the house. They were tired and hungry and very sore and they were determined to make their master pay them well for their pains. But the innkeeper would not suffer them so much as to set foot in his dwelling. "Be off with you," he said, "and take your wages with you. Here is what your master left behind; he is an artful rogue and I warrant he has plenty more like it." So saying he flung all the base money into the road and left them to take it or leave it as they pleased.

At first they were delighted to see so much money at their feet, but when they found that every single coin was made of lead, they soon changed their tune, and uttering many curses and horrid imprecations they set off down the road to tramp back to their master's house, vowing to make him pay dearly. They were more than a day upon the way, for they were tired and footsore, and when they reached the alderman's house they found a scene of indescribable confusion. His coachman and footman had told their fellow servants about the leaden money, whereupon all had become much alarmed about their wages. So they had gone in a body to their

master asking that they might be paid at once in good coins; but when the alderman opened his money bags, lo and behold! there was not a good coin in them. Every one was turned to lead. In vain he opened all his coffers and even dug up his secret hoard in the cellar. There was nothing but lead. Then he bethought himself of his silver plate, but when he rapped it with his knuckles he found that turned to lead also. Then the infuriated servants flung him out of the house and proceeded to ransack the place for booty, but though there was plenty of linen and fine stuffs, every particle of metal in any shape or form was turned to lead.

So the alderman found himself a beggar without so much as a roof to cover him, and he was glad to creep back along the road and take refuge in the very wood where dwelt the shoemaker to whom he had intended to do so much mischief.

Now, as you know, the wood is enchanted from end to end, and no sooner does the moon begin to shine than every living creature within the wood must rise and hurry to the green lawn which is in the very middle thereof, and,

whether he like it or no, dance until the fairies give him leave to stop. And those who dance well are rewarded and those who dance ill are pelted with acorns and made to mend their steps. And not everyone can dance well when the fiddles strike up, and some who have danced at court and never made a wrong step cut a very poor figure in the wood, while others who have never so much as seen a dancing master in their lives have danced so that it was a pleasure to behold them! And the old shoemaker, who knows as much about it as most people, has often said that it greatly depends upon the shoes you wear.

Now the alderman reached the wood just about sundown, and being very tired with trudging, he crept under a bush and lay down and fell fast asleep. Precisely as the moon arose he woke with a start and rubbed his eyes and pinched himself to make sure he was not dreaming; for it seemed to him he could hear a great tuning of fiddles and twanging of harps, and much noise of laughing and talking, and a great jangling of cups and platters, and he said to himself, "Depend upon it, someone is giving a party."

So he scrambled to his feet and started to run

to the place whence the sounds came, and he soon saw just ahead thousands of twinkling lights burning like a festival, and he blessed his good luck, for he felt sure that now he would get some supper. When he reached the place he found a ball was taking place in the open, and couples were dancing on the grass while the musicians played their hardest and those who were not dancing laughed and chatted among themselves until you could hardly hear yourself speak. But the instant he stepped within the circle there was the most awful silence and the dancers stopped dead and nobody stirred hand or foot. The alderman was so terrified he nearly fell to the ground and his fear increased sevenfold when he looked around and found that the entire company was made up of fairy folk. There were court ladies from Queen Mab's household and fairy princes by dozens, and nymphs and dryads and elves with all their kith and kindred; and suddenly they all began to laugh and one of them cried out, "Come along, mortal, and let us see you dance!"

Immediately all the fairy dancers retired to

the side and the alderman found himself obliged to step into the middle of the lawn and begin to dance. Such a sight was never seen before, for he was so fat that it was really ridiculous to see him attempt to bow, and when he stood on one foot and tried to cut a figure, he lost his balance and fell flat on his back. The fairy folk laughed till they nearly cried, but as no fairy can shed tears, they contented themselves with falling upon each other's necks and declaring that nothing so diverting had ever been seen before. And nothing would do but he must continue to dance and spin and twist, and he would most likely be dancing still had not something occurred to save him.

This was no less than the arrival of the princess and the young man. On the third day after the princess's visit to the shoemaker the young man called as he had promised for her shoes and himself took them to the palace, but by no means could he contrive to gain admittance or catch the merest glimpse of the princess. And he was resolute to do his errand himself, so he refused to state his business or deliver his parcel to the

lackeys, for he greatly feared they would forget all about it and the princess would never have her shoes. So he waited till nightfall and then climbed over the wall of the palace garden and tried to guess which might be the princess's window. But, alas, there were hundreds of windows, all brilliantly lighted, and he could not give the least guess. However, he was not disposed to give up all hope, so he waited till he saw the lights in the banqueting halls and the throne room extinguished and then he crept up to the terrace and watched for the smallest sign which might help him. What was his joy, therefore, when he saw a window opened and the princess herself step out upon a little balcony. An ancient vine grew upon the terrace and its branches spread over the wall of the palace and the tendrils twined themselves in the ironwork of the princess's balcony, so the young man did not waste another minute but ran across the terrace and climbed up the vine like a cat. In an incredibly short time he had reached the princess and given her the shoes.

"How can I thank you?" said the princess.

"But alas, they will be little good to me now, for I am a prisoner. My absence from the palace the other day was discovered and my cruel step-mother has locked me in my rooms and given me nothing but bread and water. How I wish I could climb like you, for then I would escape."

"Most gracious lady," said the young man, "if you will entrust yourself to me you shall not remain a prisoner another hour, and I will follow you all over the world and protect you from every danger."

Then said the princess, "Right valiant youth, if you can do as you say, I for my part am ready to go to the ends of the earth with you and share all your adventures."

"That is a bargain," said the young man and without more ado he tore the silken curtain into strips and knotted them into a stout rope which he tied round the princess's waist and so lowered her to the ground. Then he climbed down the vine after her, and they hurried through the gardens; it was rather troublesome getting over the wall, but the princess was determined to escape and the young man helped her all he could;

and the long and short of it is that very soon they were both on the right side and hurrying along as fast as they could to find the shoemaker's house, where they meant to beg shelter for the night. When they reached the wood, however, they were astonished to hear laughter and a great scraping of fiddles and twanging of harps and to see thousands of twinkling lights burning like a festival. "Depend upon it," said they, "someone is giving a party." And thereupon they began to run as hard as they could and they reached the lawn just in time to see the fat alderman standing on one foot and vainly trying to pirouette while all the fairy folk laughed and cried, "Mend your steps, mend your steps."

But the instant the princess and the young man set foot upon the grass the music stopped and there was dead silence. The alderman took the opportunity to lie down flat upon his back, determined that nothing should make him get up again, while the princess and the young man looked about them to see in what company they found themselves. When they saw they were among the fairy folk nothing could exceed their delight; the young man took off his hat and

bowed while the princess curtsied and said, "Good evening, friends."

"Good evening to you and welcome," replied the fairy folk. "And since you are here, perhaps you will be so obliging as to tread a measure."

"Nothing could give us greater pleasure," said the princess, and she and the young man stood up to dance. Now they were both wearing the shoes the old shoemaker had made for them, and when they began to dance the fairies themselves could not have done better, for they were as light upon their toes as thistledown and went through the figures with such excellent grace it could not have been improved upon. Moreover, every time their feet touched the sward it was as though a tiny bell rang.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the fairy folk, clapping their hands, and then they made them sit down upon a mossy bank and share in a wonderful feast served entirely upon gold plate.

"We are going out into the world to seek our fortune," said the princess, "and we are most lucky to have met you at the very outset, for no doubt you can tell us of all the best places to try."

“Have no fear about that,” said one of the fairy princes; “your fortunes are already made, for you dance like ourselves and it is plain you are both as good as gold, for everything about you shines like the sun.”

And at that the princess and the young man looked at each other and they could hardly speak for astonishment, for it was just as the fairy prince had said. The young man’s poor suit looked as though made of stuff woven entirely of gold, his leather shoes now matched the rest of his costume and his hat would have been good enough for a king. The princess, of course, always wore beautiful dresses, but now nothing could exceed the splendour of her attire.

“But this is too good for every day,” said the young man.

“But not too good for Fairyland,” said the fairy prince.

Just then the alderman, who had seen in what favour these two mortals were, plucked up courage to beg a boon. “I am a most miserable man,” he said. “I have done very wrong and been terribly punished. I took two golden pennies from

a poor shoemaker who lives near here and left two copper ones in their stead. Since then nothing but evil has befallen me. Gracious lady, intercede for me that I may be allowed to go away, and I will amend my ways and work until I have earned enough to pay back the two pennies."

"That is well spoken," said the princess, "and if the shoemaker will forgive you, I will beg that you may have another chance and, if I can, will put you in the way of earning an honest living."

"I forgive him," said the fairy prince. "I am the shoemaker and I think he has learnt his lesson. I will take him into my own service and teach him to make shoes." And so it was, and the alderman went to live in the shoemaker's house as an apprentice and in course of time became a decent and respectable citizen, though he was never made Lord Mayor.

But the princess and the young man went away into the very heart of Fairyland, where they found a most beautiful kingdom which was everything the heart could desire. And as they made up their minds to get married, Queen Mab gave them this kingdom for their very own as a

wedding-present, and they ruled it with the utmost felicity.

So they lived happily ever after.



The Return

THE fairy world is gay and green, the fairy
world is kind.

Unlucky was the day I left the fairy world be-
hind,

But I have heard a summons blown upon an
elfin horn,

And I'm going back to Fairyland before another
morn.



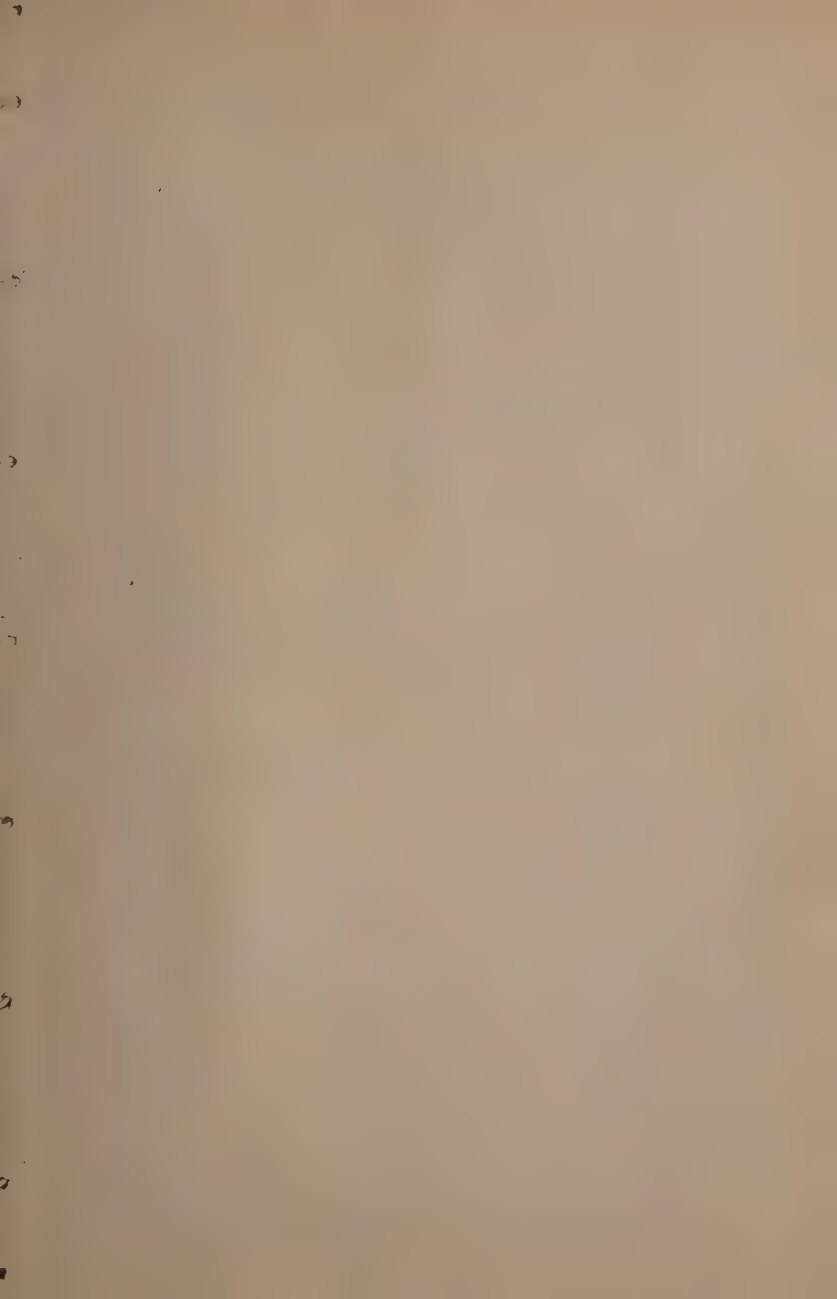
I'll wait for you at the silver door and we'll enter
hand in hand,

And sing for joy to find ourselves once more in
Fairyland;

And the wounds I got in the wars will heal and
utterly vanish away,

And we'll build a castle in Fairyland and ask all
our friends to stay.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



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